

Glendale News Press

Hospitals ban smoking

Glendale Memorial, Adventist won't allow people to light up anywhere on the grounds starting Jan. 1.

By Bill Kisliuk, bill.kisliuk@latimes.com

December 13, 2010

Come Jan. 1, there will be no butts about it at Glendale's two largest hospitals.

Glendale Memorial Hospital and Health Center and Glendale Adventist Medical Center will become smoke-free in the new year. Ashtrays will be gone, "no smoking" signs will be visible and everyone — from patients and visitors to nurses and hospital brass — will be barred from smoking in clinics, parking areas and anywhere else on campus.

Verdugo Hills Hospital plans to be smoke-free by the end of 2011, a spokeswoman said.

The moves come after several other health-care organizations and local governments — including USC medical centers, and the cities of Burbank and Glendale — have implemented aggressive no-smoking policies. Administrators say the change is a necessary step in their commitment to improve Glendale residents' health.

"We hope that the number of tobacco users in our community and our staff will decrease over time," Nancy Sesk, Glendale Memorial's quality management director, said in an e-mail.

Glendale Adventist President Morre Dean said the decision to implement the ban came after years of deliberation.

Hospital administrators sought to balance workers' personal choices against the health risks of smoking, which is a common cause of cancer, heart disease, diabetes and other severe health problems.

"It's been a very difficult decision because our organization aims to be inclusive — inclusive of people's beliefs and the decisions they make in life. But we feel that we should be a leader in our community in promoting health," he said.

Both hospitals will increase resources for patients and workers seeking to kick the habit, including low-cost or free smoking-cessation classes and access to related products, such as nicotine patches and smokeless cigarettes.

Dean and Sesk said hospital employees offered strong — but not universal — support for the new policies.

"We actually do not have a large volume of employees who smoke on the campus," Sesk said. "We have had no

formal concerns filed to date by employees and we did provide notice to our collective bargaining units."

At Glendale Adventist, Dean said, "almost unanimously, people are saying it is a great thing. But I am concerned about the small minority that say they don't think it is a great thing."

He said the hospital is educating staff about the dangers of smoking as it readies them for Jan. 1.

"We're not telling them what they can and can't do in life. We're not getting into breaks or what they do off campus or across the street," Dean said. "But we are saying the best thing for our patients and families is to have a tobacco-free campus."

Joe Piasecki contributed to this report.